



Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory (Classics in Organization and Management Series)

James D. Thompson

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Organizations act, but what determines how and when they will act? There is precedent for believing that the organization is but an extension of one or a few people, but this is a deceptively simplified approach and, in reality, makes any generalization in organizational theory enormously difficult. Modern-day organizations—manufacturing firms, hospitals, schools, armies, community agencies—are extremely complex in nature, and several strategies, employing a variety of disciplines, are needed to gain a proper understanding of them.

Organizations in Action is a classic multidisciplinary study of the behavior of complex organizations as entities. Previous books on the subject focused on the behavior of people in organizational contexts, but this volume considers individual behavior only to the extent that it helps explain the nature of organizations. James D. Thompson offers ninety-five distinct propositions about the behavior of organizations, all relevant regardless of the culture in which they are found. Thompson classifies organizations according to their technologies and environments. That organizations must meet and handle uncertainty is central to his thesis.

Organizations in Action is firmly grounded in concepts and theories in the social and behavioral sciences. While it does not offer an actual theory of administration, the book successfully extends the scientific base upon which any emerging administrative theory must rest. This classic work is of continuing value to organizational and management specialists, behavioral scientists, sociologists, administrators, and policymakers.

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